

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: FY 2016 Species Recovery Grants to Tribes

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NMFS-PRPO-2015-2004522

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.472, Unallied Science Program

Dates: Applications must be postmarked, provided to a delivery service, or received by www.grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on Tuesday September 29, 2015. Use of a delivery service other than U.S. mail must be documented with a receipt. PLEASE NOTE: It may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject an application. Please keep this in mind when developing your submission timeline.

Funding Opportunity Description: The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) recognizes the unique importance of many protected species to tribes and values ongoing efforts by tribal nations to conserve and protect species under NMFS' jurisdiction. NMFS is authorized to provide Federal assistance to tribes to support conservation programs for marine and anadromous species under its jurisdiction. This assistance, provided in the form of grants, can be used to support conservation of endangered, threatened, and candidate or proposed species, as well as post-delisting monitoring of recovered species. Proposals that address the recovery of one of the following critically endangered species are encouraged this year and will be considered a priority for funding: Atlantic salmon, white abalone, Cook Inlet beluga whales, Hawaiian monk seals, Pacific leatherback sea turtles, and southern resident killer whales. Funded activities may include development and implementation of management plans, scientific research, and public education and outreach; proposals should address priority actions identified in an Endangered Species Act (ESA) Recovery Plan or address a NMFS-identified regional priority or need. Only federally recognized tribes and organizations of federally recognized tribes, such as the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission, that have delegated authority to represent a federally recognized tribe on matters relating to ESA listed, candidate, or proposed species, are eligible to apply. Proposals focusing on listed, candidate, or proposed species of Pacific salmon or steelhead will not be considered for funding under this grant program; such projects may be supported through the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund. This document describes how to prepare and submit proposals for funding in fiscal year (FY) 2016 and how NMFS will determine which proposals will be funded; this document should be read in its entirety.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The principal objective of the Species Recovery Grants to Tribes Program is to support recovery efforts that directly benefit threatened or endangered species, species proposed for listing, recently de-listed species, or candidate species under the jurisdiction of the NMFS or under the joint jurisdiction of NMFS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Recovery efforts may involve management, research, monitoring, and outreach activities or any combination thereof.

Candidate species. A candidate species is one that is actively being considered for listing as either threatened or endangered under the ESA and is the subject of a positive 90-day finding but not yet the subject of a proposed rule, or a species for which NMFS has initiated an ESA status review and has announced the review in the Federal Register (see 71 FR 61022; October 17, 2006). Candidate species are listed at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/esa/candidate.htm>.

Proposed species. Proposed species are those that are currently the subject of a proposed rule to list as threatened or endangered under the ESA. A list of proposed species is available at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/esa/candidate.htm#proposed>.

Recently delisted species. Recently de-listed, for purposes of this solicitation, are those species de-listed within the past five years. A list of all de-listed species and the year de-listed are available at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/esa/delisted.htm>.

Successful applications will be those that demonstrate a direct conservation benefit to the species or its habitat. Proposals involving management activities should demonstrate a high probability of contributing to recovery of the species, especially through mitigation of existing threats or factors inhibiting recovery of the species. Proposals involving scientific research should demonstrate a high probability of providing information that can be used to recover, manage, or improve current management strategies for a given species. Proposals involving public education and outreach projects should demonstrate a high probability of improving or increasing public understanding and participation in conservation activities.

All projects should address priority actions identified in an ESA Recovery Plan or address a NMFS-identified regional priority or need if applicable. Priority will be given to those projects that are designed to have a direct impact on species recovery through implementation of management actions (e.g. habitat restoration, by-catch reduction, land acquisition, or mitigation of existing threats). Such proposals will receive higher priority than those projects that involve research or monitoring activities only or are merely responding to existing threats. However, research proposals that are designed to fill critical data gaps and directly contribute to management and recovery of eligible species will still be competitive under this solicitation. Projects that include measures/indicators by which performance or success of the project will be evaluated will receive higher priority.

Projects focusing on Pacific salmon or steelhead that are listed, candidates, or proposed for listing will not be considered under this grant program; tribal conservation efforts for these species may be supported through the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund.

B. Program Priorities

General. Priority will be given to proposals addressing listed species as opposed to proposals that only address proposed, candidate, or recently de-listed species. Among the species currently listed under the ESA, priority will be given to proposals addressing recovery of the following highly endangered species: Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*), Cook Inlet beluga whales (*Delphinapterus leucas*), Southern Resident killer whales (*Orcinus orca*), Hawaiian monk seals (*Neomonachus schauinslandi*), white abalone (*Haliotis sorenseni*), and Pacific leatherback sea turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*). These species are part of a recent NOAA initiative to prevent the extinction the most at-risk species. For more information on this initiative, please refer to http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/stories/2015/05/05_14_15species_in_the_spotlight.html.

Proposals addressing listed species for which NMFS has released a draft or final Recovery Plan should indicate how the project would address one or more of the recovery objectives or actions identified in the relevant Plan and what priority level the actions are assigned by the Plan. Greater priority may be given to proposals addressing higher priority recovery actions or objectives as indicated by the particular plan. Recovery Plans are available at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/recovery/plans.htm>.

Priority may also be given to projects that involve regional activities, cooperation with other tribes, or an ecosystem-based approach (e.g., projects addressing threats focused on multiple species or species groups).

Proposals including measures by which performance or success of the project will be evaluated will receive higher priority over those that do not.

Proposals that present a series of unrelated or seemingly unrelated projects are less likely to compete well. Applicants that propose multiple projects within a proposal must clearly articulate within their proposal how the distinct projects relate to one another and how the results will be synthesized. There is no limit on the number of proposals that can be submitted by an individual tribe.

Management. Highest priority will be given to those projects that are designed to have a direct impact on recovery of listed species through development and implementation of management actions that reduce or eliminate threats. Proposals involving management activities should demonstrate a high probability of contributing to the recovery of the species, especially through mitigation of existing threats or factors inhibiting recovery of the species.

Proposals addressing habitat restoration can involve the engineering and design of a restoration project, actual implementation of a restoration activity, and/or science-based monitoring of a previously funded or simultaneously proposed NOAA habitat restoration project that will yield information on population benefits accruing to listed species resulting from the restoration action.

Research and Monitoring. Proposals that involve research only will be considered a lower priority for funding relative to "management proposals" described above. However, research proposals that are designed to fill critical data gaps and directly contribute to the management and recovery of eligible species may still be competitive under this solicitation.

Proposals involving scientific research should demonstrate a high probability of providing information that can be used to recover, manage, or improve current management

strategies for a given species. Research activities may, for example, focus on defining and characterizing threats to the species, evaluating methods to reduce or mitigate threats to the species, assessing a fishery, improving bycatch estimates (e.g., through observer programs), estimating effective population sizes, synthesizing or analyzing stranding or observer data, identifying and characterizing physical and biological features of important habitats (e.g. foraging habitats, spawning areas), or evaluating the effectiveness of a habitat restoration project.

Research proposals must include a clear hypothesis or set of hypotheses to be tested, methods by which the hypotheses will be tested, methods by which data will be analyzed, and plans for sharing or disseminating the results. General statements about research objectives and expected results are insufficient.

Proposals involving scientific research on a listed distinct population segment (DPS) or a specific, recognized management unit of a taxonomic species or subspecies should demonstrate a high probability of providing information specific to the recovery and/or management of the particular DPS or management unit. To do so, such proposals may be required to include genetic analyses or other acceptable techniques to properly identify specimens to their DPS or management unit, when appropriate. Proposed budgets must reflect costs associated with any such analyses.

Outreach. Proposals involving public education and outreach should demonstrate a high probability of improving or increasing public understanding of and participation in conservation activities. In order to be considered a priority for funding, proposals that exclusively address outreach activities should demonstrate how the proposed work will directly mitigate or reduce a significant threat(s) to the target species.

Outreach projects could, for example, involve developing outreach tools (e.g. websites, brochures), convening regional coordination workshops or meetings, or working with local fishermen or boaters to address a particular issue (e.g. hook and line entanglement, boat strikes). Note that all proposals should address the dissemination of results and/or information resulting from completion of the proposed activities (including peer-reviewed publications) as explained in detail under the evaluation criteria listed in section V.A. (Application Review Information) of this document.

Applicants interested in further discussion of funding priorities should contact their Regional Section 6 Program Coordinator listed in Section VII., Agency Contacts.

C. Program Authority

16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Up to approximately \$300,000 may be available for distribution under this program in FY 2016 for new awards. While there is no set minimum or maximum amount for any award, most awards are expected to be in the range of \$10,000 to \$100,000 per year. Note that funds have not yet been appropriated for this program, and there is considerable uncertainty regarding the level of available funding for FY 2016. Thus, there is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make any new awards or that awards will be made for all qualified projects. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined during pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Publication of this notice does not oblige NOAA to award any specific grant proposal or to obligate any available funds.

There is no limit on the number of applications that can be submitted by the same Principal Investigator or tribe. Multiple applications submitted by the same applicant must, however, clearly identify distinct projects.

If an application for a financial assistance award is selected for funding, NOAA has no obligation to provide any additional funding in connection with that award in subsequent years. Notwithstanding verbal or written assurance that may have been received, pre-award costs are not allowed under the award unless approved by the Grants Officer in accordance with 2 CFR §200.458.

B. Project/Award Period

Project periods may extend up to a maximum of 3 years. For multi-year proposals, applicants must include project plans and budgets for each year of the project. Multi-year projects may be funded in one-year increments or in their entirety depending on available funds. In either case, multi-year awards do not compete for funding in subsequent budget periods within the approved award period. Rather, any funding required for subsequent years is added to the multi-year award provided demonstration of satisfactory performance by the recipient and provided funds to support the continuation of the project are available. If an applicant wishes to continue work on a funded project beyond the project period and obligated award funds have not been expended by the end of this period, the applicant can notify the assigned Federal Program Officer no later than 30 days prior to the end of the award period to determine eligibility for a no-cost extension. If, however, the money is expended and funds are needed to continue the project, the applicant should submit another proposal during the next competitive award cycle (e.g. FY 2017) or seek an alternate source of funding.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Under this solicitation, NOAA will fund grants. Funding will be provided in 12-month increments, with a maximum project period of 3 years.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are federally recognized tribes defined under the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act (Public Law 103-454; for list see <http://www.bia.gov/cs/groups/webteam/documents/document/idc1-029026.pdf>) or presidential executive order. Organizations of federally recognized tribes, such as the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission, that have delegated authority to represent federally recognized tribes on matters relating to listed, candidate, or proposed species, are also eligible to apply. Organizations of federally recognized tribes are required to provide supporting documentation demonstrating that they do have delegated authority from tribal officials and that the delegated authority is for the type of activity being proposed in the application.

Federal agencies or institutions are not eligible to receive Federal assistance under this notice. In addition, NOAA and NMFS employees shall not provide assistance in writing applications, write letters of support for any application, or otherwise confer any unfair advantage on a particular application. However, for activities involving collaboration with current NMFS programs, NMFS employees can write a letter verifying that they are

collaborating with the project.

Applicants not meeting these eligibility criteria will not be considered for funding under this solicitation.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

There are no cost sharing or match requirements under this solicitation.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

Funding can only support work on ESA-listed species, recently de-listed species, and species that have become a candidate or a proposed species by the grant application deadline. Species must also be under NMFS or joint NMFS-U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service jurisdiction. However, Pacific salmon and steelhead that are listed, candidates, or proposed for listing will not be considered under this grant program, but may be supported through the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund. Current lists of eligible candidate, proposed, and de-listed species are available at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/esa/other.htm>; and a current list of threatened and endangered species is available at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/species/esa_table.pdf. Applications addressing ineligible species will not be reviewed.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

The federal funding announcement and application instructions for this grant program are available via the Grants.gov website at <http://www.grants.gov>. Applicants without internet access can obtain application instructions from NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources, ATTN: Heather Coll, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring MD 20910, (phone) 301-427-8455, (email) Heather.Coll@noaa.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

Proposals must adhere to the following provisions and requirements by the proposal submission deadline. Applicants are encouraged to submit proposals early in the event that we are able to pre-screen applications for any deficiencies, contact applicants, and obtain revised applications by the solicitation deadline. This pre-screen is a courtesy, not an

obligation on the part of the Program Office, and it is not a guarantee for this competition. The pre-screen is limited to addressing technical matters and providing publically available information about the applications. No substantive comments or pre-review of application content will take place.

The following forms are required as part of each application: Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424); Budget Information, Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A); Assurances, Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B); and Certifications Regarding Lobbying (CD-511). These forms are available on Grants.gov. For applicants submitting proposals by mail, the SF 424 must be signed (preferably with blue ink).

Proposals and all attachments must be formatted for letter-sized paper (8.5" x 11"). Text should be no smaller than 10-point font, and all pages must be numbered. The Project Description should not exceed 15 pages. Within the Project Description, tables and visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs, and other pictorial presentations are not included in the 15-page limitation. Abbreviated curricula vitae (CVs) or resumes should be appended to each application. Appended material must not exceed a total of 10-pages in length and can include letters of endorsement, an indirect cost rate agreement, permit information, related grant progress reports, or any other supporting information.

To be considered, proposals must include the following information:

1. Title Page

Provide the project title, project duration (with a start date of July 1, 2016 or later unless applicants request and get approval for an earlier start date from the Program Officer, Heather Coll; See Section VII, Agency Contacts), applicant name(s), name(s) of the Principal Investigator (or Project Manager) and any Co-Investigators (or Co-Managers), complete contact information (address, telephone, fax, email, and phone number) for the applicant(s) and all Co-investigators (or Co-Managers), and a statement regarding the Federal, non-Federal, and total costs of the project. Contact information should include phone numbers and email addresses.

2. Project Summary (1-page limit)

Provide a brief summary discussing the project goals and objectives, the proposed activities, the geographic area where the activities would occur, the recovery objectives or actions as specified in a NMFS Recovery Plan (if applicable) or a NMFS-identified regional priorities or need, and expected outcomes and benefits of the proposed activities. This summary may be posted on our website if the project is funded. If the proposal focuses on implementing recovery actions identified in a NMFS Recovery Plan, indicate the priority number or level assigned to the particular actions.

3. Project Description (15-page limit)

Describe the project activities completely and accurately. The Project Description should be a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and must include the information listed below in (a)-(g). Multi-year applications must include such information for each year of the proposed activity.

(a) Project goals and objectives: Identify the specific problem(s) or opportunities the project intends to address and describe its significance to the recovery of the species. Identify the project objectives, which should be simple and understandable, as specific and quantitative as possible, and attainable with the time, money and human resources available.

(b) Project narrative: Describe the methodologies or technical plan for activities that are to be conducted during each budget period of the project. Include detailed descriptions of the specific plan and/or methods that will be employed. Project milestones and the timelines (e.g. the number of months) necessary to meet them should also be discussed. Information about relevant permits necessary to conduct the work must be included. See Section IV.G. (Other Submission Requirements (Permits and Approvals)) below for further information about permits and approvals.

(c) Benefits or results expected: Identify the outcomes or results and the benefits to the species that should result from the successfully completed project. Discuss how the project's success in meeting the stated goals and objectives will be measured or assessed. Describe how these expected outcomes, results, or products will be applied and/or made available to any appropriate user groups.

(d) Need for Government financial assistance: Demonstrate the need for government financial assistance. List all other sources of funding that are or have been sought for the project.

(e) Federal, State, tribal and local government activities: List any plans or activities (Federal, State, tribal or local) this project would affect and, if applicable, identify the relationship between the proposed work and other ongoing work, or work planned, anticipated, or underway through Federal Assistance or other means. If the proposal is a continuation of previous or ongoing work, a brief discussion of results or accomplishments to date should be included; progress or final reports for previous awards may be included in the appendix.

(f) Environmental Impacts: Discuss any potential negative impacts on listed species or their critical habitat as a result of the proposed activities. If applicable, discuss ways in which any such negative impacts will be minimized or mitigated.

(g) Project management: Describe how the project will be organized and managed and who will be responsible for carrying out project activities. The lead organization/individual and person listed as the technical contact should be identified as the Project Manager (PM) or Principal Investigator (PI). Use of sub-contractors or volunteer staff time to complete project activities and oversight of those individuals should be discussed. The PM/PI is responsible for all technical oversight and implementation of the approved work plan as delineated in the proposal. One PM or PI must be designated on each project, but the PM/PI may or may not be the applicant. However, if the applicant is not the PM/PI, there must be an explanation of the relationship between the applicant and PM/PI (e.g. applicant will be responsible for managing the grant funds and the PM will be responsible for completing the project milestones on time and within budget, etc.). Project participants or organizations that will have a significant role in conducting the project should be listed as Co-investigators or Co-Managers. Organizations or individuals that support the project, for example, researchers contributing data or materials, should be referred to as Cooperators. Copies of the PM's or PI's and all Co-investigator's/Co-Manager's current resumes or curricula vitae must be included as appendices.

4. Data Management Plan

Environmental data and information, collected and/or created under NOAA grants/cooperative agreements must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at minimal cost, in a timely manner (typically no later than 2 years after the award expires), except where limited by law, regulation, policy or by security requirements.

A Data/Information Sharing Plan of no more than two pages shall be required as part of the Project Narrative. A typical plan may include the types of environmental data and information to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; procedures for providing access, data, and security; and prior experience in publishing such data. The Data/Information Sharing Plan will be reviewed as part of the NOAA Standard Evaluation Criteria, Item 1 - Importance/Relevance and Applicability of Proposal Project to the Program Goals.

The Data/Information Sharing Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) will be made publicly available at time of award and, thereafter, will be posted with the published data.

Failing to share environmental data and information in accordance with the submitted Data/Information Sharing Plan may lead to disallowed costs and be considered by NOAA when making future award decisions.

For further information on NOAA's Data Sharing Policy and samples of Data Management Plans, please refer to information posted here:
<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/conservation/states/faq.htm>.

5. Total project costs and budget justification

Each application must include clear and concise budget information, both on the required Federal forms and in the narrative detail of this section. Multi-year applications must include budget information for each year of the proposed activity.

Applications must include OMB standard form 424A, "Budget Information - Non-construction Programs." All instructions should be read before completing the form, and the amounts per category and total amounts indicated on the form should correspond with amounts indicated elsewhere in the proposal.

A spreadsheet or table listing itemized costs per category (e.g., salary, supplies, equipment, travel, contractual) and the corresponding Federal and non-Federal share and direct and indirect cost totals must be provided. The proposed budget must indicate the Federal and non-federal (if applicable) share for each cost category. Such budget detail must be provided for each year of multi-year projects. Budget tables or spreadsheets must be formatted to fit letter-sized paper (8.5" x 11"). A budget justification in narrative form must also be provided to explain and justify all project costs. This narrative must be organized to clearly correspond to the information provided in the budget table/spreadsheet. Detail provided in the spreadsheet and/ or the narrative must also be sufficient so that reviewers can interpret how costs were estimated or calculated, especially for costs over \$5,000. Contractual costs must be itemized and justified similarly to other cost categories. For any non-Federal share, the itemized costs should be identified as cash or in-kind contributions.

6. Appendices (10-page limit)

Abbreviated curricula vitae or resumes of the PM/PI and any Co-Managers/ Co-Investigators should be included with the application. Applicants requiring ESA scientific research permits must also include evidence of such a permit (e.g. by providing the permit number) or evidence that they have submitted an ESA permit application. If indirect costs are being requested as part of the proposed budget, a copy of the applicant agency's indirect cost rate agreement should be provided. Additional material that is necessary or useful to the description of the project may also be provided (e.g. letters of endorsement, tables or visual materials).

C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be postmarked, provided to a delivery service, or received by <http://www.grants.gov> by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on Tuesday September 29, 2015. Applications submitted by U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Use of a delivery service other than U.S. mail must be documented with a receipt. Proposals submitted after the deadline cannot be considered

for funding. PLEASE NOTE: It may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject an application. Please keep this in mind when developing your submission timeline.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.”

E. Funding Restrictions

1. Indirect Cost Rates.

The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the Federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., utilities, rent, insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and, therefore, cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the federal government must be included in the application.

Under 2 C.F.R. § 200.414, any applicant that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs which may be used indefinitely. Costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs, but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both pursuant to 2 C.F.R. § 200.403 “Factors affecting allowability of costs.” If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a recipient non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate for a rate, which the recipient may apply to do at any time.

Alternatively, if the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award. The NOAA contact for indirect or facilities and administrative costs is:

Lamar Revis, Grants Officer

NOAA Grants Management Division

1325 East West Highway

9th Floor

Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

lamar.revis@noaa.gov

2. Allowable Costs.

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the project. Allowable costs are determined by reference to the Office of Management and Budget's "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements," regulations published in 2 C.F.R. part 200, Subpart E. A project begins on the effective date of an award agreement between the recipient and the Grants Officer and ends on the date specified in the award. Accordingly, applicants cannot be reimbursed for time expended or costs incurred in developing a project or preparing the application; such expenditures also cannot be accepted as part of the cost share.

F. Other Submission Requirements

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary Federal, State, tribal and local government permits and approvals where applicable for the proposed work to be conducted. If applicable, documentation of requests or approvals of permits must be included in the proposal package. ?

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Projects involving directed or incidental take of threatened or endangered species generally require permits under section 10 of the ESA (50 CFR 222.307 and 222.308). If an ESA permit covering the proposed activities has already been issued, the permit number must be provided in the application. Issuance of the necessary ESA permit(s) or evidence that the applicant has submitted a permit application is required in order for a proposal to be considered for funding. If the grant applicant is not the Principle Investigator (PI) or the permit holder, a copy of the authorization to work under the permit and/or a letter of support from the permit holder is required. ?

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For further information on permit requirements and application procedures for federal natural resource permits, contact the NMFS Office of Protected Resources Permits Division (301-427-8401) or see <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/>?

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If proposed activities will take place within National Marine Sanctuaries, National Parks, National Seashores, and other federally designated protected areas, the applicant is responsible for requesting and obtaining any necessary permits or letters of agreement from the appropriate government agencies prior to award.?

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Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize potential adverse impacts on the environment. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they have sufficient environmental documentation to allow program staff to determine whether the proposal is categorically excluded from further analysis or whether additional analysis is necessary in conformance with requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). For those applications needing further analysis, affected applicants will be informed after the merit review stage and asked to assist by providing any information necessary to complete a tiered draft Environmental Assessment based off the Programmatic Environmental Assessment or an Environmental Impact Statement. ?

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Failure to obtain other Federal, State, tribal and local permits, approvals, letters of agreement, or failure to provide information necessary to complete environmental analyses where necessary (i.e., NEPA environmental assessments or documentation) may delay the award of funds if a project is otherwise selected for funding.?

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Applications should be submitted electronically through the Grants.gov website at <http://www.grants.gov>. NOAA strongly recommends that applicants do not wait until the application deadline to begin the application process through Grants.gov. To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a unique entity identifier (i.e. Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number) and register in the System for Award Management (SAM) before submitting its application; the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) is now a part of SAM and is located at www.sam.gov. Applicants should allow at least 5 business days to complete the SAM registration; registration is only required once. The application process in Grants.gov cannot be completed without completing SAM registration. Also, it may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject an

application. Please keep this in mind when developing your submission timeline. Following submission of applications through Grants.gov, applicants should receive two automated responses from Grants.gov: one confirms receipt of the application; the other confirms that the application has been forwarded to NOAA. If both confirmation messages from Grants.gov are not received, applicants should contact both the Grants.gov Helpdesk and the NMFS Office of Protected Resources to confirm the application has been transmitted and received by NOAA. ?

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If you experience a Grants.gov “systems issue” (technical problems or glitches with the Grants.gov website) that you believe threatens your ability to complete a submission before the application deadline, please (i) print any error message received; and (ii) call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 for immediate assistance. Applicants need to obtain a case number regarding communications with Grants.gov. Please note: problems with an applicant organization’s computer system or equipment or failure to comply with the Grants.gov system requirements are not considered “systems issues.” Similarly, an applicant’s failure to: (i) complete the required registration, (ii) ensure that a registered AOR submits the application, or (iii) notice receipt of an email message from Grants.gov are not considered systems issues. A Grants.gov “systems issue” is an issue occurring in connection with the operations of Grants.gov itself, such as the temporary loss of service by Grants.gov due to unexpected volume of traffic or failure of information technology systems, both of which are highly unlikely. It is the applicant’s responsibility to take necessary steps to document a “systems issue” and contact NOAA. In the event of a confirmed “systems issue,” NOAA reserves the right to accept an application in an alternate format (i.e. hard copy submission), however all applications must be received by the deadline. Late applications will not be accepted.?

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For applicants lacking internet access, hard copies may be submitted (by postal mail or commercial delivery) to the NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources, ATTN: Heather Coll, 1315 East-West Highway, SSMC3, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Applications submitted by U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Use of a delivery service other than U.S. mail must be documented with a receipt. Paper applications should be printed on one side only, on 8.5” x 11” paper, and not be bound in any manner. A signed (in ink) SF 424 must be included. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. ?

Applications should be submitted electronically through the Grants.gov website at <http://www.grants.gov>. NOAA strongly recommends that applicants do not wait until the application deadline to begin the application process through Grants.gov. To use Grants.gov, applicants must have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and register in the Central Contractor Registry (CCR). Applicants should allow at least 5 business days to complete the CCR registration; registration is only required once. Also, it may take Grants.gov up to two business days to validate or reject an application. Please keep this in mind when developing your submission timeline. Following submission of applications through Grants.gov, applicants should receive two automated responses from Grants.gov: one confirms receipt of the application; the other confirms that the application has been forwarded to NOAA. If both confirmation messages from Grants.gov are not received, applicants should contact both the Grants.gov Helpdesk and the NMFS Office of Protected Resources to confirm the application has been transmitted and received by NOAA. ?

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For applicants lacking internet access, hard copies may be submitted (by postal mail or commercial delivery) to the NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources, ATTN: Heather Coll, 1315 East-West Highway, SSMC3, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Applications submitted by U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Use of a delivery service other than U.S. mail must be documented with a receipt. Paper applications should be printed on one side only, on 8.5" x 11" paper, and not be bound in any manner. A signed (in ink) SF 424 must be included. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. ?

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

The proposals will be evaluated by reviewers based on the following criteria as described below (with their relative weights):

1. Importance/Relevance and Applicability of the Proposal to the Program Goals (35%).

This criterion addresses whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal, regional, State, tribal or local activities. Applications will be evaluated on clear identification of project goals and objectives and applicability of those goals and objectives to conservation and recovery goals for threatened or endangered species, de-listed species, or candidate species as specified in a NMFS recovery plan (if applicable) or a NMFS-identified regional priority or need. Reviewers will consider whether the project meets the program goals and priorities as stated in sections I.A. and I.B. of this document, which includes the six species that are a priority for funding: Atlantic salmon, white abalone, Cook Inlet beluga whales, Hawaiian monk seals, Pacific leatherback sea turtles, and southern resident killer whales.

Reviewers will also score the proposal based on their consideration of the contribution of potential outcomes, results, or products to species conservation and management goals; whether milestones and products are clearly identified; and whether performance measures for evaluating effectiveness of the completed project were clearly identified. (Score: 1-35 points; where, for example, 1= no importance/relevance to the program goals or objectives, very limited potential to contribute to species recovery; 17.5= moderately important/relevant, and likely to make a moderate contribution to species recovery; 35= extremely important/relevant, and likely to make a significant contribution to species recovery.)

2. Technical/Scientific Merit (30%).

For proposals addressing management and outreach, this criterion addresses whether the approach is appropriate for achieving the stated goals and objectives, whether the approach will result in successful execution of the project, and if the anticipated results can be achieved in the time line specified. Reviewers will consider whether sufficient information is provided to evaluate the design of the project relative to the stated goals/objectives.

For proposals addressing research and monitoring, this criterion addresses whether the approach is technically sound, if the methods are appropriate for achieving the stated goals/objectives, and if the anticipated results can be achieved in the time line specified. Reviewers will consider the sufficiency of information to evaluate the project technically, and if such information is sufficient, the strengths and/or weaknesses of the technical design relative to securing productive results, and if data collection is proposed, the inclusion of quality assurance considerations.

For all applications, reviewers will consider whether the proposal includes an effective mechanism for evaluating the project's success in meeting the stated goals and objectives. Reviewers will also evaluate whether application instructions contained in this document were followed and if all required elements were submitted. (Score: 1-30 points; where, for example, 1= completely unsound and/ or unlikely to meet the stated objectives, application instructions were not followed, and no performance measures included; 15= intermediately sound, and/ or reasonably likely to meet the stated objectives, application instructions generally followed; 30= extremely sound and highly likely to meet the stated objectives, application instructions followed thoroughly.)

3. Overall Qualification of Applications (10%).

This criterion addresses whether the applicant possesses the necessary expertise, experience, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. Reviewers will consider previous related experience and qualifications of the project's PM or PI, Co-Manager(s) or Co-Investigator(s) and other personnel, including designated contractors, consultants, and cooperators. Reviewers will also consider past award performance of the applicant(s) and PM/PI. (Score: 1-10 points; where, for example, 1= completely unqualified and/or lacking the resources or capacity to accomplish the project, poor past award performance; 5= intermediate level of qualifications or experience and/or adequate resources and capacity to accomplish the project, satisfactory past award performance; 10= extremely qualified/ experienced, has all necessary resources and demonstrated capacity to accomplish the project, exceptional past award performance.)

4. Project Costs (15%).

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is sufficiently detailed, realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. The itemized costs and the overall budget must be adequately justified and appropriately allocated. (Score: 1-15 points; where, for example, 1= unrealistic and lacking sufficient detail; 7.5= adequately detailed and realistic; 15= extremely detailed and realistic.)

5. Outreach and Education (10%).

This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. Reviewers will consider whether project results or products will be shared appropriately

given the nature of the proposed work and whether sufficient detail is provided to make this determination. Depending on the nature of the project, "outreach and education" may include, for example, peer reviewed publications, presentations at professional meetings, development of brochures, internal agency meetings, public meetings, or distribution of project results to appropriate managers or management agencies. Proposals should be rated on whether the outreach/ education discussed is appropriate for the type and nature of the proposal and whether the outreach/education is expected to be effective. Every proposal does not necessarily require a public outreach component in order to be considered "effective" or "appropriate" outreach/education. (Score: 1-10 points, where 1= insufficient/ineffective outreach, 5= adequate outreach, 10= extremely effective outreach.)

B. Review and Selection Process

Screening, review, and selection procedures will take place in 3 steps: initial evaluation, merit review, and final selection by the Selecting Official (i.e., Director, Office of Protected Resources). Initial screening and evaluation of applications will be conducted to ensure that application packages have all required forms and application elements, clearly relate to the 2016 Species Recovery Grants to Tribes solicitation, and meet all of the eligibility criteria.

Applications meeting the requirements of this solicitation will then undergo merit review. Each application will be reviewed by a minimum of three reviewers, who will independently evaluate and score proposals using the evaluation criteria provided in section V.A. (Evaluation Criteria) above. Merit reviewers will be individuals with appropriate subject-matter expertise and may be from Federal, State, or Tribal agencies, academic institutions, or non-profit organizations. The reviewers' ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals.

After applications have undergone merit review, the Selecting Official will make the final decision regarding which applications will be funded based upon the numerical rankings and evaluations of the applications by the merit reviewers as well as the selection factors set forth in section V.C. (Selection Factors) below.

C. Selection Factors

The merit review ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final recommendation to the NOAA Grants Officer. The Selecting Official shall award in the rank order of the review ratings unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon the following factors, where applicable:

- a. Availability of funding
- b. Balance/distribution of funds
 - i. Geographically
 - ii. By type of institutions
 - iii. By type of partners
 - iv. By research areas
 - v. By project types
 - vi. By species or species groups
- c. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA
or other federal agencies
- d. Program priorities and policy factors as set out in Sections I.A. (Program Objectives) and B (Program Priorities) and Section II. A. (Funding Availability)
- e. Applicant's prior award performance
- f. Partnerships with and/or participation of targeted groups
- g. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the Grants Officer.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of proposals will occur during winter 2015, and funding is expected to begin during summer 2016 for most approved projects. Project start dates should be no earlier than July 1, 2016, unless an earlier start date request is approved by the Program Office.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive notification that the application has been recommended for funding to the NOAA Grants Management Division. This notification is not an authorization to begin performance of the project. Official notification of funding, signed by a NOAA Grants Officer, is the authorizing document that allows the project to begin. Notifications will be issued to the Authorizing Official and the Project Manager/Principal Investigator of the project either electronically or in hard copy. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not selected for recommendation. Unsuccessful applications will be kept on file in the Program Office for a period of at least 12 months, and then destroyed.

NOAA is not responsible for delays in processing new awards that are not accompanied by adequate and accurate budget justifications and forms. For guidance on preparing budget justifications, please refer to tips and examples posted on our website at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/conservation/states/faq.htm>.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements.

Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in the “Department of Commerce Pre-Award notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements,” published in the Federal Register on December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78309). The Pre-Award notice may be accessed at the Government Printing Office website at www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-30/pdf/2014-30297.pdf. Applicants whose proposed projects may have an environmental impact must furnish information requested to assist proposal reviewers in assessing the potential environmental consequences of supporting the project.

2. Limitation of Liability.

Funding for programs listed in this notice is contingent upon the availability of Fiscal Year 2016 appropriations. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not

oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

3. Universal Identifier.

Applicants should be aware that they are required to provide a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number during the application process. See the October 30, 2002 Federal Register, Vol. 67, No. 210, pp. 66177-66178 for additional information. Organizations can receive a DUNS number at no cost by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS Number request line at 1-866-705-5711 or via the internet (<http://www.dnb.com>).

4. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals that are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6.pdf, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm. Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g. the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems). In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposed project. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

5. Statutory and National Policy Requirements.

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the Central Contractor Registration and Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25, 170 (2013), http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=1ccffb4c1d4de03addd6a041113460f9&mc=true&node=se2.1.200_1300&rgn=div8

6. C. Reporting.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Sub-award Reporting System (FSRS) available at www.FSRS.gov on all sub-awards over \$25,000.

C. Reporting

Grant recipients will be required to submit financial and performance (technical) reports. All financial reports shall be submitted to NOAA's Grants Management Division in accordance with the award conditions. Performance reports should be submitted to the NOAA Program Officer (Heather Coll, Office of Protected Resources) in accordance with the award conditions. All performance reports will be submitted on a semi-annual schedule and must be submitted no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award. The last semi-annual performance report may not be required depending on award conditions. Additional reporting on project outputs and outcomes may be required at the request of the Program Office to facilitate program performance evaluation. A comprehensive final report is due 90 days after award expiration. Data collected by recipients under a Species Recovery Grant must be made available no later than 90 days after the award period concludes if requested. Any reports or publication resulting from funded work should acknowledge funding received through the "NOAA Fisheries' Species Recovery Grant Program."

VII. Agency Contacts

If you have any questions regarding this proposal solicitation, please contact Heather Coll at the NOAA/NMFS/Office of Protected Resources, Endangered Species Division, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910, by phone at 301-427-8455, or by email

(Heather.Coll@noaa.gov). You may also contact one of the following people in your region for further guidance: Jessica Pruden, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (Jessica.Pruden@noaa.gov, 978-282-8482); Karla Reece, Southeast Regional Office (Karla.Reece@noaa.gov, 727-824-5348); Justin Greenman, West Coast Regional Office (Justin.Greenman@noaa.gov, 562-980-3264); Barbara Mahoney, Alaska Regional Office (Barbara.Mahoney@noaa.gov, 907-271-3448).

VIII. Other Information

Unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)—Required. Each applicant is required to: (i) Be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier in its application (i.e. DUNS number); and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. NOAA may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time NOAA is ready to make a Federal award, NOAA may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Department of Commerce regulations implementing FOIA are found at 15 C.F.R. part 4, Public Information. These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the FOIA. Applications submitted in response to this FFO may be subject to requests for release under FOIA. In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information which is exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information. Based on these markings, the confidentiality of the contents of those pages will be protected to the extent permitted by law.